



"Defend Women's Reproductive Freedom!" poster by Edward Locke.

News Report

2022 Los Angeles Rallies for Women's Reproductive Freedom

BY EDWARD LOCKE

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

Recently, controversy over Roe vs. Wade case occurred in U.S. Supreme Court, provoking a ferocious bipartisan fight and widespread street protests. In fact, two months before this new wave of protests, a rally was organized locally.

The event occurred on Saturday, March 5, 2022, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., as a celebration of the International Women's Day (March 8), with the theme of Defending Women's Rights to Abortion, at the entrance of the Grand Park, in the heart of downtown Los Angeles, right across the Spring Street, facing the front entrance to the Los Angeles City Hall.

The participants, mostly students from local colleges and universities, some abortion providers or civic group organizers such as a speaker name Patrina representing Gabriella Los Angeles, were protesting against the attempts of some conservative Supreme Court Justices to undermine the landmark precedent of Roe vs. Wade in Mississippi and Texas. They numbered around 50; and the organizers included Black Lives Matter Pasadena Chapter and others.

“While the Democratic Party stands idly while assault on women's reproductive rights and bodily autonomy continues, working-class women of color who are the most disproportionately impacted by a ban on abortion rights,” claimed the organizers of the event in their flyers. They demanded “Legal Abortion Only and for All” and “Keep Abortion Safe and Legal” in their posters. Speakers also advocated free health care for women in need of abortion, challenging the conservatives in the court system by claiming that “Abortion is a Human Right.”

In addition to the issue of “defending women's reproductive freedom,” the organizers extended their topics to broader domestic and international issues such as social justice and world peace; the flyers they distributed are also opposed to both Russian invasion of Ukraine and Zelenski Government's oppression of Russian minority in Ukraine.

The heated debates over the issue of “women's reproductive freedom” and “right to life” or opposition to abortion rights escalated in angry and even violent protests recently countrywide, over the leak out of attempts of some conservative Supreme Court Justices and GOP Congressmen to overturn the previous landmark 1973 court judgement on Roe vs. Wade case legalizing abortion, and over recent passage of anti-abortion legislations in the GOP-controlled “Red States.” As reported by Los Angeles Times, CBS News, Facebook, Twitter and other social media, protests occurred across southland, including downtown Los Angeles and Culver City.

Many other local events on the issue occurred in recent months in the Greater Los Angeles area according to news reports from mainstream and social media.

On April 10, 2020, inside the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, full of parishioners, protesters in “Handmaid’s Tale” outfits, i.e., red robes and white bonnets, similar to those worn by “handmaids” in the Hulu drama series, interrupted Sunday’s morning Mass, according to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles spokesperson Yannina Diaz. The performance of the protesters depicted a United States in which, among other plot points, women’s reproductive rights were abolished, and the handmaids were forced to bear children.

On May 3, protesters gathered in West Hollywood for a march to support abortion rights. In the same day, LAPD officers and protesters clashed in downtown Los Angeles after rally against overturning of Roe vs. Wade turned violent. Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department deputies were on hand to provide traffic control and keep protestors safe, according to Sergeant. E. Jalvez.

On Saturday, May 7, hundreds of Southern Californians joined protestors across the United States to support women’s rights to abortion, in Culver City, Hollywood and other areas of Los Angeles County, including a park in West Hollywood, Vicente and Santa Monica boulevards, La Cienega Boulevard, Melrose Avenue, Robertson Boulevard, and many other middle-class residential and commercial areas, as well as important places of public activities such as Veteran’s Memorial Park in Culver City.

Protestors carried signs that read “My Body My Choice,” “We Won’t Go Back” and “Abortion on Demand Without Apology,” “Respect My Existence or Expect Resistance” amongst other things. They could be heard chanting, “C’mon, c’mon and join the fight! Abortion is a human right!”

The organizers of these rallies included Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights, the Culver City High School Reproductive Rights Club, POC4Change, Culver City Community Coalition, Culver City Community of Color Collective and the Culver City Democratic Club. Some groups also had a national week of action planned, set to begin on Mother’s Day and including a nationwide protest on May 14.

As reported by many local social media, on Friday, May 13, 2022, California Ethnic Media Services invited experts and professionals to a forum to discuss the impact of Roe vs. Wade on women’s health. The guests included U.S. House Representative Judy Chu, Washington State Assemblyman Pramila Jayapal, National Asian-Pacific American Women’s Forum Trustee Sung Yeon Choimorrow, HEART Women and Girls Trustee Aliza Kazmi, Asian-American Justice Center trustee John C. Yang. Chu pointed out that close to a quarter of American women has experienced abortion, among them are more than 20% of Asian-American women. Pramila Jayapal said that even if Roe vs. Wade is overturned, abortion will not disappear; instead, it will continue under the table; women will lose the right to abortion in a safe and legal manner and place themselves in a dangerous situation; the victims will include new immigrants, low-income people, and survivors of incest and rape. Choimorrow said that based on the conclusion of an investigation conducted by the University of Chicago, approximately 35% of Asian-American women had abortion; and this group ranked second among all racial and ethnic groups; more than 85% of Asian-American women believe that women should enjoy reproductive freedom. Choimorrow also indicated that there is still a long way to achieve women’s rights in full scale, and that these should include access to contraceptive pills,

improvement of health care services in general, paid vacations for women and others. Kazmi said that according to a public opinion poll among American Muslims, 56% of American Muslims support the rights to abortion; many Muslims believe that in most cases, abortion should be legal and it does not violate any religious tenet; and historically, in the Islamic societies, the decision to have an abortion is made by the individual, the pregnant woman and her nurse; and outside intervention has never been an Islamic practice.

On Saturday, May 14, 380 protest rallies occurred across the United States, demanding the government's protection of women's rights to abortion. In Washington D.C., more than 17,000 residents participated in the demonstration, marching from the White House to the Supreme Court. In New York; some protesters told news reporters that they intended to use the issue of abortion rights to mobilize voters for the Mid-Term Election in November, in the Brooklyn area, approximately 3,000 people joined the protest, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

In Los Angeles, tens of thousands rallied in several parks to oppose the attempt of the Supreme Court to overturn the Roe vs. Wade verdict. In the rally in Pasadena starting at 8:00 a.m., Saturday, May 14, 2022; speakers included U.S. House Representatives Judy Chu, Adam Schiff, California Assemblyman Anthony J. Portantino and State Senator Mike Fong, and Mayor Victor M. Gordo, as well as representatives of local civil groups. The sponsoring organizations included Pasadena and San Gabriel Valley Planned Parenthood (PPPSGV), Indivisible, San Gabriel Valley LGBTQ Center, YWCA Pasadena-Foothill Valley, and Civic Sunday. At 10:00 a.m., a big rally started in front of Los Angeles City Hall, and speakers included Mayor Eric Garcetti, U.S. Senator Alex Padilla, House Representatives Karen Bass and Maxine Waters, California State Senator Sydney Kamlager, and representatives of several civic groups and women's organizations. Locations of rallies included Harvey Milk Promenade in Long Beach, two plazas in Palos Verdes Estates, Green Pier in Avalon Foothill and North Indian Hill Boulevards in Claremont.

On Sunday, May 15, 2022, around 1:00 p.m., a group of around 50 high school students rallied in the small park adjacent to Los Angeles City Hall to support women's reproductive freedom; the event was sponsored by ProChoice with Heart. The posters held by the participants read "Abort Patriarchy, Reproduce Dignity." "My Body My Choice," "Stop War on Woman," "No Woman Can Call Herself Free if She Cannot Have Control over Her Own Body," and "My Body Is Not A Democracy, It Is An Empire and I Am Its Dictator, You Do Not Get A Vote," among others.

As the fight over the issue of women's reproductive freedom continues, more street protests could be anticipated.

Photos by Edward Locke



Signs carried by the abortion rights protesters (Saturday, March 5, 2022, Grand Park, Los Angeles).



Signs carried by two abortion rights protesters (Saturday, March 5, 2022, Grand Park, Los Angeles).



Around 50 participants in the abortion rights protest event (Saturday, March 5, 2022, Grand Park, Los Angeles).



T-shirts sold in the abortion rights protest event (Saturday, March 5, 2022, Grand Park, Los Angeles).



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A speaker in the abortion rights protest event (Saturday, March 5, 2022, Grand Park, Los Angeles).



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Pro-choice rally in front of Los Angeles City Hall (May 15, 2022, ProChoice with Heart).



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